

Of and About the Makers of Books.

Some of the Latest Volumes To Issue from the Press.

FAMOUS COMPOSERS.

The excellent serial work, "Famous Composers and Their Works" (published by the J. B. Millet Co., Boston) has progressed to its fifteenth part. In the five new numbers included bibliographical sketches and studies of the Strauss family—that is to say, the two Johanns and Joseph Strauss—by Henry T. Finck; Joseph Joachim Raff, Carl Goldmark, Orlando Di Lasso and Richard Wagner, by W. J. Henderson; Johannes Brahms and Gabriel Rheinberger, by Louis Kelterborn; Max Bruch and Palestrina by Louis C. Elson; and two essays, one by John K. Paine and Leo R. Lewis jointly, on "Music in Germany," and the other by W. J. Henderson on the Netherlands masters. We wish, in this notice, to call briefly to the attention of the reader to "Music in Germany," Mr. Finck's sketch of the Strausses, and Mr. Henderson's study of Wagner.

Professor Paine is of the opinion that music in Germany antedates its employment in the church. "We have the best inferential evidence," he writes, "that the sense of melody and rhythm existed in definite form among the German people of the middle ages earlier than in church music." When the monks of St. Gallen sought to introduce the Gregorian chant into Germany, it is known that they could not get the people to join willingly in its plain chant. Hence the shrewd monks introduced "sequentes," or hymns with words in rhymed Latin set to fitting music. These people readily accepted the music, but not the words which had been previously given to such singing and would have no other.

German music, prior to Sebastian Bach, is divided into three general divisions, the folksongs or Volkslieder, the love-songs of the troubadours, called Minnesingers, the church, the church chorals. The first class is the oldest and the best; but of it little has come down to us. The Volkslieder were tender and rhythmic; the Minnesinger for the most part heavy and solemn; and the church chorals devoid of sprightliness and the more graceful emotions. Instruments were not used in the Minnesinger music, but in the thirteenth century, the development of the counterpart in the Netherlands greatly accelerated its vogue in Germany and during the early years of the Reformation, Protestant church music became one of its counterparts in the development of Protestant church music began near the middle of the sixteenth century, "when," says Professor Paine, "it became the fixed custom to place the melody in the highest part of the harmony. When given to the tenor, the melody was lost in the polyphonic complexity of the other voices." Its transference to the soprano was determined upon as early as 1542, at which time it was ratified in a collection of Calvinist psalms.

The seventeenth century witnessed, in Italy, the invention of the organ, with its scrupulous alternations of recitative and aria and its great quickening of instrumentation. This century saw the general introduction of bowed instruments and may therefore be regarded as giving to music the orchestra substantially as it is now known. The influence of these changes was apparent in Germany as well as in other European nations; and in Lasso's music choir we find as early as 1595 30 instrumentalists re-inforcing 60 voices.

In the Dresden band, a few years later, the organ and other instruments to 33 wind and percussion instruments. Organ and clavier playing, begun at this period in Italy, spread into Germany and in the last two decades of the century we find the modern fugue assuming shape, soon to be made immortal by the genius of Sebastian Bach.

Clavier, or clavier, composition was of later growth. "At first, indeed," writes Professor Paine, "the same principles were applied to both instruments. But as time went on, the less ponderous of the two instruments became the exponent of the gay moods, as represented by various forms of the dance. The name sonata, now of such definite meaning in connection with chamber music, was at first represented by short Venetian organ pieces. Subsequently, in the seventeenth century, the sonata was a composition for one or more violins with clavier. The first application of the name sonata to a solo for clavier was made by Johann Kuhnau, Bach's predecessor as cantor of the St. Thomas school at Leipzig." This brings instrumental music down to the time when its onward progress is familiar to all. It remains for us to trace the evolution of the opera and the oratorio, both of the name sonata to a solo for clavier.

About the year 1655, one Johann Kapsberger, a composer who had resided for 20 years in Rome, began to write music for the voice after the fashion then in vogue in Italy. Gottlieb, at about the same time, wrote the first German opera, Heinrich Schütz, a contemporary, wrote one serious opera, "Dafne," which has been lost. In 1678, a permanent theatre was established at Hamburg. Here operas were produced with great success for a period covering 60 years. It was as director of the Hamburg theatre that Reinhard Keiser, the forerunner of Handel, and hardly second to Handel in genius, wrote and produced 120 operas, in many of which, in addition to choruses and recitatives, there were no less than 40 arias. From the time of the Hamburg theatre under Keiser's conductorship, and under the stimulus of Matheson's and Telemann's genius, down to the present, the opera has been a fixed factor in German music. We have traced its beginnings very hastily; its later magnitude is known of all men.

The early history of the oratorio in Germany is not dissimilar to that of the opera. Heinrich Schütz, who wrote the first serious German opera, was the first prominent oratorio composer. By his attempts to tell the "Resurrection" in a composition in dramatic form, without the aid of action, Schütz "became" the founder of the modern oratorio. Contemporary with Schütz, Schell, who was noted for his concertos, Johannes Rosenb. died in 1680, effected a more serious construction of the concerto, in this form "consist of a separate movements which are united by the recitative of some principal part. Thus the form of the cantata was established, in which Bach after-

ward displayed such wonderful activity." The immediate predecessors of Bach were Johann Rudolf Ahle and his son, George Ahle. In the oratorios of the latter the form of the aria is clearly defined. With these introductory steps toward the time of Bach, Handel and Mozart the subject of music in Germany may safely for the present be abandoned.

Most of the histories of music, by some singular oversight, ignore the Strauss family. Possibly, this is done because, in the opinion of certain critics, the music composed by these masters of dance rhythm is not sufficiently classic to deserve mention alongside the ponderous symphonies and dreary sonatas of some of the heavier German composers. But if it is intended in a history of music to give recognition to genius which has thrilled and charmed millions of people in all continents; which has appealed, with equal certitude of response, to the learned and the unlearned, wherever the witching measures of the waltz have been passed, we shall not find it difficult to find the Strauss family in the history of music. It is to be said in behalf of the creator of the light, or so-called "comic" opera which is held persons out of every ten, at least in America, is unquestionably the only form of opera known to the masses of the world, and it is a fatal error to neglect to accord mention to the compositions of the two Johanns and to Joseph Strauss.

The elder Strauss became a composer owing to a singular circumstance. He had been, for several years, a viola player in the orchestra of Johann Lanner, the first impresario of Vienna. It was Lanner's custom to produce new waltzes upon stated occasions, rarely composing them until a few hours before their production. Upon one of these occasions, an important one, Lanner suddenly fell ill. How to get the waltz written in time was a problem. Lanner vainly bethought him of even known expedient, save one. At last, he sent to Strauss, asking him to take the work in hand. Strauss did so; the waltz was played with the notes on the score still wet from his pen, and next day, all Vienna was telling the story of the miracle. That slight circumstance influenced him to found an orchestra of his own, and to compose waltzes and polkas for it, which he continued to do until the day of his death, Sept. 25, 1849.

But it was in the younger Johann, son of this composer, that the genius of the Strauss family culminated. Sixty-four years ago, this son, then a lad of six years, composed a waltz called the "First Thought." Since then waltzes have proceeded from his prolific pen at the rate of nearly eight a year, notwithstanding his activity as the composer of light operas, as a conductor of travels have been ten times as varied and far-reaching as had been those of his father, and as a biographer of that father and a student of music. His most celebrated waltz, the "Blue Danube," is number 314 in the order of his waltzes. He has written 440 of these, and altogether there are 440 of these. His brother Joseph was also a fertile composer. Although Joseph was delicate of constitution and lived only forty-three years, the number of his original compositions—chiefly waltzes and polkas—was 282, in addition to which he is credited with more than 200 arrangements. The other brother, Eduard, has composed something like 200 dance pieces, but is better known as the successor of Johann as executive head of the Strauss orchestra at Vienna.

We must not, however, conclude this reference to the Strausses without adding a word concerning what has undoubtedly been the junior Johann's greatest achievement—that is to say, his invention. If we may use the term, of the Viennese type of light opera. "When Strauss turned to composing operas," writes Mr. Finck, "there was great consternation, because it was feared that the carnival in Vienna and elsewhere would have to dispense thereafter with its annual gifts from his pen. These fears were unfounded; his operas were so full of waltz and polka buds and full-blown roses that it was easy to pick them for a concert-hall and ball-room bouquet; so that, in his best recent dance pieces are taken from his operas. Equally unfounded were the fears that after devoting more to a quarter of a century to the composition of dance music, Strauss would be unable to win distinction as a dramatic writer. In his first operas, it is true, the libretto was little more than a peg to hang on waltzes, polkas and marches; but gradually he emancipated himself more and more from the simple saltatorial style, until in 'The Bat,' the 'Merry War' and subsequent works he created a new type of operetta, with beautiful flowing, lyric melodies and stirring dramatic assemblages. True, the 'waltz king' is never quite able to disguise his character, but in this very fact lie the originality and unique charm of the Strauss operetta. It is a new style of stage-play—the Austrian operetta—a new school of dramatic opera; and creating this Strauss placed himself far above his father and his brothers. Millocker would not have been possible but for Strauss, and Suppe did not write his best works until after Strauss had shown the way."

The list of Strauss' operettas comprises: "Die Fledermaus," 1874; "The Carnival in Rome," 1875; "The Bat," 1874; "Cagliostro," 1875; "Prince Methusalem," 1877; "The Blind Man's Buff," 1878; "The Queen's Lace Handkerchief," 1880; "The Merry War," 1881; "A Night in Venice," 1883; "The Gypsy Baron," 1885; and "Simplicius," 1887. In Mr. Finck's study of his influence upon the lyric stage and upon musical canon is hardly to be envied. Mr. W. J. Henderson, however, has done it remarkably well. We have seen that it could, without going outside Wagnerian, stock two libraries each equal in size to the Albright Memorial Library; and collect more portraits, photographs and views of Wagner and Wagnerian subjects than there are pictures in all Scranton, and the subject of the idea of the profusion of materials surrounding the biographer of the great German reformer. We shall not attempt to follow Mr. Henderson through his well-compressed details of Wagner's life. All who are interested in them are recommended to read the excellent biography written by Adolphe Julien, an American translation of which is now available. A word concerning Wagner's purposes, and we shall have reached the limits of our present space.

The stage of Bayreuth was not the first person to devote the decadence of dramatic and operatic forms which was prevalent during the first half of the present century. In his preface to "Alceste" Gluck had announced the theory that the music of an opera should express the poetry, and not the other way around. In the opinion of the interest of the situations, without interrupting the action or weakening it by superfluous ornament. His idea was that "the relation of music to poetry was much the same as that of harmonious coloring and well-disposed light and shade in painting. The music which animates the figure without altering the outlines." But, as Mr. Henderson tells us, "while Gluck made sweeping changes for the better, he failed to reach the root of all evil. He did not abolish the operatic stage to whom art was nothing and the poet the superior officer of the poet." It remained for Richard Wagner not only to reach this fundamental difficulty, but virtually to revolutionize the entire world of dramatic song. He "saw the theater in the hands of the poet, and he set himself to work to clear the stage of everything; while the public, jaded and sated, ceaselessly clamored for new sensations. Continued attempts of the money-seeking managers to satisfy this public demand, which was in its very nature insatiable, had led to a condition of opera in which the music and the organic connection with the text, the pageantry and ballets no logical relation to the pictorial ensemble." To a man of the phenomenally active genius of Wagner, such a spectacle was intolerable; and it was inevitable from his very temperament that he should seek to whom art was nothing and the poet the superior officer of the poet.

His purpose, in brief, was to blend the music, both of the voice and of the instruments, with the spoken sentiment and the acted emotion of the opera as to produce a thoroughly harmonized effect upon the auditor; and not to make the music a mere accompaniment to the acted posture even momentarily independent of the other factors—in other words, "to demonstrate that the modern theater had the power to bring itself into the same relation to the noblest ideal of man as the Greek theater had."

It was a herculean undertaking; and is not yet wholly successful. But it is true beyond a peradventure that every year adds to the number and enthusiasm of Wagner's admirers; and the evolution of the Wagnerian drama proceeds apace. "The great Bayreuth master has," writes Mr. Henderson, "been severely censured, by those who cling to the belief that music should always be pretty, for having written many harsh progressions and for having indulged in remarkable boldness in his harmonies. These so-called sins have found their justification in the fact that Wagner was not aiming at purely musical beauty. The whole purpose of his work was 'exact and life-like embodiment of the poet's thought.' When the emotions were grand and beautiful, the music had to be of a similar character. It is for this reason that we find the marbling anger of Alberich and Mime, the bitter hatred of Ortrud, the fury of Isolde, voiced in music which is not pretty, but truthful. But on the other hand, when Wagner has to express the sorrows of the Volungs, the love and passion of Siegmund and Sieglinde, the perfect realization of feeling in the death of Siegfried, or the highest elevation of woman's love in the last moments of Isolde, he rises to a sublime height of melody, an overwhelming dignity of harmony and an irresistible eloquence of instrumentation not equalled by any other composer."

The conclusions which Mr. Henderson reaches concerning Wagner's rank as a musician are embodied in the following passage: "It is indisputable that he was the greatest master of the art of scoring who has ever lived. He showed a profound insight into the individual capacity of every instrument, and in the combination of instruments he excelled even the gifted Frenchman. He enriched the body of tone of the modern orchestra by the employment of the tenor tuba, and emphasized the force of the nature of the instrument. His addition to the customary number of horn parts splendidly improved the mellow tone and solidity of the brass choir, and his use of the bass clarinet, not simply as a solo instrument, but as a reinforcement of the organ-like bass of the wood-wind instrument was a stroke of genius. He further developed the expressiveness of the woodwind band by the novelty of his distribution of harmony among its members. Not only did he allot solos to them with unerring judgment, but departing from the conventional style of the classical symphonies, he wrote for wood instruments in pairs playing in thirds and sixths, he wrote for these instruments in a marvelously effective dispersed harmony. In writing for the strings, Wagner divided them more frequently than his predecessors had done, often making six or eight light parts among the violins alone. Altogether his instrumentation is richer in its polyphony and more solid in its body of tone than that of any other composer. He has been accused of being noisy, but power of sound is not necessarily noise. There is more noise in some of Verdi's shrieking piccolo passages, accentuated with bass-drum thumps, than in the loudest passage that Wagner ever wrote. Taking him by and large, as the sailors say, Wagner is the most striking figure in the history of music. He will remain fixed upon the records as the most commanding intellect that ever sought to express its thought and accomplish its purposes through the medium of music. His influence upon his contemporaries has been larger than that of any master since the science of modern music began."

Of the ten leading articles in the April Forum, that by John McCarthy concerning the life of Lord Robert is possibly the most interesting. The leader of the Irish parliamentary party is of the opinion that the present English premier has within him the potential ability to become one of the great of English statesmen; but he is also of the opinion that Lord Robert is for some inscrutable reason, has yet chosen to put forth his highest power.

An article by Richard Dutton, the author of "The Welsh Jottings," "The Heathen Tone for American Literature" lays down the principle, which will receive very general indorsement, that the highest forms of art expression, whether in painting, sculpture, music or literature, come only upon a high and noble confidence in ethical standards, and are stifled, stunted and repressed by the prevalence, as at present, of a foolish regard for "art for art's sake." Other valuable contributions to this number of the Forum are W. H. Mallock's analysis of socialism, Edward Atkinson's plea for gold monometallism, Professor M'Master's reminiscent glance at past financial crises in this country, Henry Fletcher's statistical demonstration that the small American town is doomed, and Dr. Newman Smyth's strong argument for the abolition of the lottery, and thus of gambling and the lottery evil.

In point of well-balanced contents of a character best adapted to the purpose of general education, the Chautauquan occupies a position not, to our knowledge, rivaled by any competing publication; and in its April number one may perceive a notable illustration of the comprehensive policy of its conductors. We quote a few of the titles of the more conspicuous articles in this number: "Queen Victoria and Her Children," "What the Stars Are Made of," "Napoleon on the Island of Elba," "The World's Debt to Modern Science," "Politics as a Career in England," "The Great Tunnels of the World," "How Christians Destroyed a Tribe of Indians"—being one case in which a missionary zeal was cruelly misdirected—Labor Bureau and Their Work," "The Reign of Money," "The Smallest Republic in the World"—that of San Marino, in Italy, which, although only seventeen square miles and containing only 8,000 population, has a history dating back to the fourth century B.C., "Florence, Nightingale, a Character Study," "Influences of the Weather on Diseases," "Easter, Its Eggs and Legends," and "Women Among the Early Germans." We know of no more instructive feast than this, comprised within the pages of a single magazine.

The first article in the Cosmopolitan for April is also one of the best written and most interesting articles printed this month. It is Mrs. Robert P. Porter's graceful biographical sketch of the celebrated Lady Hamilton, of whom our great grandfathers raved and of whom Lord Byron's "The Nymph of the Attitudes," as she is termed in this article's title, who, the daughter of a peasant coat carrier, and herself a nurse maid, rose by her grace of person and flirtatious arts to the position of wife of England's king, and of the late King Edward, together with one by Lady Colin Campbell on "English Country-House Parks" and George Frederick Seward's contrasting of China with Japan forms the magazine's predominant features.

Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin's Humanitarian is beginning to become a really interesting periodical. For it presents at least three articles that do it signal credit. The first of these is Professor Bonney's paper on "Science and Faith," in which, after showing that the Reformation was a scientific process, he contends that scientific research is a necessary antidote for the superstitions which tend to collect around faith as barnacles around a ship. The second is by F. St. John Bullen, a treatise of problems concerning the prevention of insanity, holding that while science teaches the need of stringent state regulation of the procreative function, to the end that children may be healthy in both body and mind, it also teaches the necessity of conditions, to go further than to insist upon a more general diffusion of the laws of hygiene, so that personal restraint from vicious practices may follow as a voluntary consequence. The last article is by Rev. J. Rice Byrne, and comprises a vigorous arraignment for the folly of the law of corporal punishment in schools.

Successive numbers of that dainty Chicago fortnightly, The Chap-Book, strengthen its hold upon the affections of readers who can appreciate even a censurable fad, when it is followed with originality, novelty and fine scorn of the conventional. For April 1 the Chap-Book presents a well-composed sonnet, Endymion, by De Gaulta; a Maeterlinckian prose sketch by Gilbert Parker, entitled "The Golden Pipes"; a "Lyric of Joy," by Bliss Carman; a sketchy bit of travel and description concerning Colombia, the "land of revolutions," a poem by Duffell Osborne and a two-page drawing by Charles Dana Gibson, for Herbert Chatfield Taylor's decadent novel, "Two Women and a Fool." Lastly, we have the "Notes," tremendously affected and phantasmagoric, at times, yet fetching for all that. Upon the whole, notwithstanding its faults, we should not like to spare the Chap-Book.

Authors and Publishers: William Dean Howells is profusely writing poetry. First numbers of the Chap Book are selling in Boston at \$4 to \$7.50. William Watson has been granted a grant of £100 a year from the British civil list. Professor John Fiske is writing a new book dealing with the early history of Virginia.

Mark Twain has sailed again for Europe, this time to bring his family home and settle down once more at Hartford. A Chicago paper boasts that there are 200 poets and authors within a radius of four or five miles of the city hall in that city. The sum of 20,000 pesetas (\$1,000) has been collected in Spanish America for a monument to the female poet Donna Concepcion del Arenal.

The Bookman understands that Theodore Watts has abandoned his long-cherished plan of writing the life of his friend, Dante Rossetti. A manuscript volume entitled "Letters to Roy Twelfth" has been found among the unpublished papers of the late Robert Louis Stevenson. Charles A. Dana has edited, revised and added to his lectures on the making of a newspaper, which will be published in book form by the Appletons. The American committee in London issues an appeal for an additional subscription of \$1,000 to complete the international memorial to Tennyson on the Isle of Wight. The rights in the "Memoirs of General Grant" have been bought by the Century company, which will issue a new two-volume library edition, not to be sold by subscription.

A new poet has been discovered by Chas. of New York, in an Ohio man, Franklin E. Denton, who is said to have been sedulously hiding his light under a bushel in northern Ohio for years. Bronson Howard is the wealthiest dramatic writer in this country. His work has paid him well from the start. His stage royalties from "Rhenish" alone have been \$100,000 in the last five years. "The Jewel of Ys" is the title of a novel to appear soon in London.

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S. L. Crockett, the Scottish novelist, is sick with indigestion in London, where, for some weeks before the attack, he was lionized extensively and enjoyed it. Crockett, it seems, was in London journalism before he studied for the ministry. Now he has left the pulpit to write novels.

The demand for the number of Harper's Monthly containing the portion of "Felix" by left out of the novel in book form—the threat of Mr. Whistler to bring a libel suit against the publishers—continues as great as ever. The price of the number has risen at least 1,000 per cent. and the "Felix" leaves have been taken out, handsomely bound and sold at \$15.

An exceedingly artistic and dainty little 22-page announcement of novelties for sale of good books has been issued by the Frederick A. Stokes company, New York. One of the novelties included in this announcement is a handsome volume, "The Phantom Death and Other Stories," by W. Clark Russell. It will form one of this firm's select Twentieth Century series of select works of fiction.

From Dodd, Mead & Co., of New York, through M. Norton, of this city, have been received two new books: one, M. de Valmieu's "The New Kingdom of the United States," extended mention of which was made last Saturday in the department, "Facts of Interest to Women Readers;" and the other Chester Holcombe's study of "The Real Chinaman," a most interesting and timely book, extended review of which must be deferred until next Saturday.

Thomas "Master Builder" was produced at Hooley's theater, Chicago, a few days ago by pupils of the Chicago conservatory. Before the performance Hamlin Garland read an essay on the elevation of the stage, commending the production of a play which is literature, which scorns the conventions of stagecraft—or, rather, stage-weakness—which has no soliloquy, no misbegotten soliloquies, no bombast and no misguided rhetoric; "Inflamed Chicagoans thought the play rather dreary."

WELSH JOTTINGS. The vacancy in the list of the prose adjudicators of the Llanelly National eisteddfod of 1895 caused by the death of Rev. J. Wyndham Lewis, of Carmarthen, has been filled by the appointment of Rev. W. R. Jones (Golefyrn), Carnarvon.

A circular has been issued to the Calvinistic Methodist churches and congregations in the Vale of Clwyd cautioning them against being "misled and deluded" to sign petitions against the Welsh disestablishment bill.

The first number of a reprint of the sermons of Rev. Charles Evans, under the editorship of Rev. Owen Davies, Carnarvon, has just been issued. The issue will include the two series of sermons already published. The first series was issued by the author from Cardiff, in 1829, and the second series after the talented author's death.

When the late Rev. Edward Matthews, of Bridgend, lived in Ewenny, he was often met by a very able parson of eccentric habits, who would challenge him to preach for the best with him. "All right," said Mr. Matthews one day, entering into the spirit of the thing, "I will do it." The parson, "where shall we preach?" "In your pulpit," replied Mr. Matthews. "I can't allow you there," said the parson. "It is contrary to law." "All right," put in Mr. Matthews, "you shall have a challenge me to preach until you have paid me the money."

The Liberals of the Montgomery boroughs have been singularly unfortunate. After encountering extraordinary difficulties in the choice of candidates, they succeeded in finding a very promising one in the person of J. W. Williams, of Dolgellau, but only a few weeks after his acceptance of the candidature, the hand of death has deprived them of his services, and they have now to begin again the work of selecting a candidate who will be likely to wrest the seat from Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones.

The report of J. T. Robson (H. M. Inspector of mines for the South Wales district, which does not include Monmouthshire) for the year 1894 sets out, as usual, a number of highly interesting statistics, and is full of suggestive comment and counsel. The total number of fatal accidents in his district was 146, compared with 152-3, the average number for the preceding ten years; but the deaths amounted to no less than 440, being 211 more than in 1893, and 226 more than the average number of deaths for the ten years 1884-93. This extraordinary increase in the number of deaths is more than accounted for by the Alibon catastrophe, which caused the loss of 290 lives, a number only once exceeded in the annals of mining accidents in this country.

Explosion in the Oakes colliery, in Yorkshire, Dec. 12, 1886, and which was followed by other explosions within two days, causing a further loss of 27 lives. Even after deducting the Alibon loss, the number is still a large one, but its largeness was not due to any accident in the Netherlands, it was plainly casualties, which may be seen from the following statement:

Not Founded on History. In a literary discussion the other evening it was stated very positively that Robert Browning's poem, "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent," was founded upon historical facts, and that the episode would be found narrated in Motley's "Dutch Republic." This same episode was very hotly discussed in England shortly after the appearance of the poem. As there is a semblance of truth in the poem to the history of the Spanish oppression in the Netherlands, it was plainly argued that the "Good News" was the formation of the northern alliance by William the Silent, which finally wrested the independence of the Netherlands from Spain. While this discussion was at its height it occurred to one of the disputants to inquire of Mr. Browning himself, whereupon he replied: "There is no sort of historical foundation for the poem about 'Good News from Ghent to Aix.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off, African coast after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate the value of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse, Roy, then in my stable at home." This ought to settle the point.

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The first number of a reprint of the sermons of Rev. Charles Evans, under the editorship of Rev. Owen Davies, Carnarvon, has just been issued. The issue will include the two series of sermons already published. The first series was issued by the author from Cardiff, in 1829, and the second series after the talented author's death.

When the late Rev. Edward Matthews, of Bridgend, lived in Ewenny, he was often met by a very able parson of eccentric habits, who would challenge him to preach for the best with him. "All right," said Mr. Matthews one day, entering into the spirit of the thing, "I will do it." The parson, "where shall we preach?" "In your pulpit," replied Mr. Matthews. "I can't allow you there," said the parson. "It is contrary to law." "All right," put in Mr. Matthews, "you shall have a challenge me to preach until you have paid me the money."

The Liberals of the Montgomery boroughs have been singularly unfortunate. After encountering extraordinary difficulties in the choice of candidates, they succeeded in finding a very promising one in the person of J. W. Williams, of Dolgellau, but only a few weeks after his acceptance of the candidature, the hand of death has deprived them of his services, and they have now to begin again the work of selecting a candidate who will be likely to wrest the seat from Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones.

The report of J. T. Robson (H. M. Inspector of mines for the South Wales district, which does not include Monmouthshire) for the year 1894 sets out, as usual, a number of highly interesting statistics, and is full of suggestive comment and counsel. The total number of fatal accidents in his district was 146, compared with 152-3, the average number for the preceding ten years; but the deaths amounted to no less than 440, being 211 more than in 1893, and 226 more than the average number of deaths for the ten years 1884-93. This extraordinary increase in the number of deaths is more than accounted for by the Alibon catastrophe, which caused the loss of 290 lives, a number only once exceeded in the annals of mining accidents in this country.

Explosion in the Oakes colliery, in Yorkshire, Dec. 12, 1886, and which was followed by other explosions within two days, causing a further loss of 27 lives. Even after deducting the Alibon loss, the number is still a large one, but its largeness was not due to any accident in the Netherlands, it was plainly casualties, which may be seen from the following statement:

Not Founded on History. In a literary discussion the other evening it was stated very positively that Robert Browning's poem, "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent," was founded upon historical facts, and that the episode would be found narrated in Motley's "Dutch Republic." This same episode was very hotly discussed in England shortly after the appearance of the poem. As there is a semblance of truth in the poem to the history of the Spanish oppression in the Netherlands, it was plainly argued that the "Good News" was the formation of the northern alliance by William the Silent, which finally wrested the independence of the Netherlands from Spain. While this discussion was at its height it occurred to one of the disputants to inquire of Mr. Browning himself, whereupon he replied: "There is no sort of historical foundation for the poem about 'Good News from Ghent to Aix.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off, African coast after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate the value of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse, Roy, then in my stable at home." This ought to settle the point.

Price definition of Life. The price of one guinea, offered by "The Bazar" for the best definition of "Life," has been awarded for the following definition: "Life is a trial trip before the launch into eternity."

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